



60-B Weston Street Hartford CT, 06120

Good Afternoon members of the Education Committee

Representative Fleishman and Stillman

My name is Merva Jackson; I'm the Executive Director of AFCAMP (African Caribbean American Parents of Children with Disabilities). AFCAMP is a family organization in the state of Connecticut that provides education, support and information to parents raising children with disabilities for the purpose of improving their children's education and quality of life.

I'm here to testify in support of S.B 1038 An act to Individual Education Program. In the eleven –years since AFCAMP existence in the state we have served thousands of families and attended hundreds of Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meetings to assist and support families to advocate for appropriate Individual Education Plan (IEP) for their children. After eleven years of working with families, the state Department of Education, Federal Office of Special Education Program and local school districts. I'm shocked at what I still see 90% of the times that I sit at a PPT meeting. There are School personnel and parents with no knowledge of the Individual with Disability Education Act (IDEA) which is the federal law that guide special education services, no knowledge on guidelines and processes to ensure that they are developing and implementing appropriate Restraint and Seclusion policies, how to write an appropriate goal and objective to meet the students needs.

Despite additional language to the revision of IDEA 97 and No Child Left Behind that requires that training be provided to parents and teachers. There a huge gap in the amount of regular education and special education teachers with the skills and knowledge necessary to develop, implement and monitor students IEPs. This need to be a mandate part of the curriculum for teacher's preparation that implemented as part of their college preparation and additional courses specific to disabilities and disability law for special education teacher's certification.

Although these things are required as part of IDEA that parents be trained and the state receive discretionary dollars from the Office of Special Education programs that can support these trainings it rarely happens. The SDE have made efforts in the past and through other methods to try to implement these provisions but they have not been the most effective. We need to implement more effective measures to ensure that parents are provided with the knowledge and information necessary for them to participate meaningfully as a member of their children's PPT team and their first educator.

On behalf of the parents that AFCAMP represent I appeal to you to ensure that the individuals working with our students on a daily basis gain the knowledge and skills necessary to better serve our students with disabilities. It is measures such as these when implemented correctly that will begin to improve our state achievement gap and ensure that our most vulnerable student have the opportunity to achieve academic success.

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AFCAMP'S Executive Director

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